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5105 North Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, California 90042
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Published in the United States of America by Builders of the Adytum and simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada by Ridout and Maybe, Toronto 1, Canada.

New and Revised Edition

Printed in the United States of America

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# TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson No 22

BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

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## Lesson Twenty-two

### THE HERMIT

The scene in Key 9 is a direct antithesis to that of the preceding Key. In Key 8 we see a fertile valley warmed by the sun. Here is an icy, wind-swept peak, wrapped in darkness.

This does not mean that they who reach the heights of adeptship receive naught for their pains but a sterile, icy, perception of abstract truth. The Hermit's gray robe, symbol of wisdom, keeps him warm. **He carries his own light.** The cold and darkness merely symbolize the **latency** of the fiery activity of the One Force, and are in contrast to the lion of Key 8. The heights of spiritual consciousness seem cold and dark to those who have not scaled them; but they who stand upon these lofty peaks endure no discomfort.

The ice at the Hermit's feet is the source of the river in the Empress' garden, the same river which flows behind the Emperor and the Chariot. This ice, therefore, is the substance of the High Priestess' robe in another form. That robe, as you read in Lesson 8, symbolizes the **root matter** which underlies all variations of form. In Key 9, the vibratory motion of the root matter is represented as being arrested and crystallized (ice), because the symbolism of Key 9 refers to THAT which does not itself enter into action, though it is the **source** of all activity throughout the universe.

A bearded ancient is the central figure of this picture. He is the "Most Holy Ancient One", identified in Qabalah with the Primal Will. He is clad in gray, a mixture of black and white, the colors of the High Priestess' pillars, of the wand and rose of the Fool, and of the sphinxes which draw the Chariot. His garment therefore represents the union and equilibration of all pairs of opposites.

His cap is shaped like a letter Yod. It is blue, the color of the High Priestess' robe, to intimate that the **One Identity** always perfectly recollects its own nature and powers.

The cap, moreover, is a sort of crown. This bit of symbolism says to an initiated observer: The Crown is Yod. No comment is required. They who are ready to receive the instruction compressed into these four words will perceive the tremendous import of the statement. Yet it would be impossible to give more light to the unprepared even though we devoted many pages to attempts at explanation.

The Hermit has brought his lantern and staff from the valley below whence he came. The staff, a branch of a tree, is a product of the organic side of nature. It refers to the fiery activity

of the serpent power of Key 8. The Hermit used this power to help him climb the mountain, and in some versions of Tarot the staff is drawn to look like a serpent. In other versions, but not the older ones, a coiled snake with uplifted head is on the ground in front of the Hermit. This is an unnecessary innovation. The staff itself is sufficient indication of the serpent power. The Hermit holds the staff in his left hand to show that he no longer needs it for climbing.

The staff grew, but the lantern was made. It is of glass and metal derived from the inorganic side of nature. The basic principles on which our understanding of cosmic law is founded are discoverable in the physical, chemical and electrical activities of the mineral kingdom. Our chief source of illumination (the lantern) is man's mental grasp of the meaning of these basic activities. Yet we rely on the Life-power's expression through organic beings (the staff) to assist us in our endeavors to rise above the limitations of self-consciousness to the heights of superconscious realization.

The light in the lantern is from a six-pointed star. The star is composed of two interlaced equilateral triangles. From time immemorial it has typified the union of opposites. One great Master of the Wisdom has written that he who understands this symbol of the hexagram in all its aspects is virtually an adept.

Because it is a symbol for the number 6, the star has special Tarot reference to Key 6. It indicates that discrimination is the source of enlightenment. Astrologically, it refers to Virgo, sixth sign of the zodiac, which is attributed to the letter Yod.

To Yod also is assigned the direction North-Below, corresponding to the line of the Cube of Space in which North (Peh, Key 16) and Below (Gimel, Key 2) are united. What is symbolized by Key 9 is something at work in man at the subconscious level. This is true in spite of all the symbolism suggesting height. Our contact with the **One Identity** is an **interior** contact made in the **darkness** of subconsciousness.

Subconsciousness is our instrument for communion with superconsciousness. Thus the Tarot tableau in Lesson 2 shows the number 9 **between** 2 and 16 as the agency which carries the power of 2 into the field of expression represented by 16. The power expressed by the Hermit is drawn from sources typified by the High Priestess, and it is applied to the activity symbolized by Key 16. Through right recollection (Key 2) we come to know the **One Identity** (Key 9), and this knowledge overthrows all structures of separative delusion (Key 16). The lightning-flash in Key 16 is a ray from the Hermit's lantern.

The line North-Below connects the lower end of the line North-East (Heh, Key 4) to the lower end of the line North-West (Lamed, Key 11). For Key 9 represents cosmic forces working at subconscious levels to bring to bear on Karma (Key 11) the ordering and controlling power of the Constituting Intelligence (Key 4).

This is in accordance with the principle of antithesis which makes every Key of Tarot a contrast to the Key which precedes it. In Key 8, the emphasis was on personal effort, on **conscious** control of the animal and other subhuman forces. The stress in Key 9 falls on the doctrine that personal action is really a response to superconscious influence. The most important transformations are those of which we are quite unconscious. They occur below the threshold of conscious awareness in the region of our physical bodies which, say astrologers, is governed by the sign Virgo.

Yet these transformations are direct consequences of the **conscious effort** pictured by Key 8. Just as the record on the scroll of the High Priestess is derived from what the Magician observes, so is the contact which is established interiorly, whereby we become aware of the **One Identity**, a consequence of the working of the power of the Magician through the agency of the woman in Key 8. This woman is just the instrumentality through which the Magician works. It is **his** power that tames the lion, not hers.

Therefore Key 9 represents not only the rulership, but also the exaltation, of the planet Mercury. This astrological doctrine, as applied in practical occultism, means that our power to take conscious command of certain processes which go on in the Virgo region of the human body enables us to set a pattern for subconsciousness, a pattern whereby the human body is transformed into a finer, regenerated vehicle for the **One Self.**

The actual building process is made possible by changes in the blood stream. These changes are initiated in the Virgo region of the human body.

They are never begun until one understands, intellectually, the law which makes them possible. One must know that subconsciousness is amenable to suggestion. One must know that subconsciousness controls body functions and body structure. One must know that patterns impressed on subconsciousness from the self-conscious level will begin alterations in blood chemistry, in organic functions, and even in the structure of certain parts of the body. One must know that the human body is built from materials taken into the blood stream from chyle in the small intestine. All this knowledge is really a participation in the Constituting Intelligence symbolized by the Emperor.

It is **head** knowledge brought into our personal field of consciousness by the functions of the brain, ruled by Aries. It is a sharing of the vision of reality which is always present to the all-seeing eye of Universal Mind. Thus it corresponds to the Emperor, and to the direction North-East.

Through bodily changes occurring in the Virgo region, this head knowledge is actually incorporated into the physical organism. It is then brought to bear on that part of the body which, as being under the astrological dominion of Libra, corresponds to the line North-West on the Cube of Space, and to Key 11 in Tarot.

Libra governs the kidneys and the adrenal glands. In the Libra area of the body are organs which perform some of the most important physical functions. This lesson is not the place to discuss these functions which will come in for more extended examination in the course entitled The Great Work. Yet here it may be said that organs in the Libra area control the state of chemical equilibrium in the blood stream. Upon this equilibrium, not only ordinary health, but also the special organic conditions peculiar to adeptship, absolutely depends.

The line North-Below connects also the northern end of the line East-Below, assigned to the letter Cheth, and to Key 7, to the northern end of the line West-Below, assigned to the letter Ayin and to Key 15. This relation, like that between Zain and Samekh, mentioned in Lesson 20, must wait explanation until we study Key 15. In the meantime, you should take careful note of all the symbols on the left-hand, or northern, side of Key 7. In these you will find indications as to the sources of power expressed through Key 9 and brought to bear through the agency of what is pictured by Key 15.

The picture of the Hermit tells us that above the merely personal level of our daily experience is a real Presence, which is all that we aspire to be. That Presence, however far off it may seem, however inadequately we may understand it, however shrouded in darkness and obscurity its real nature, is always friendly and helpful.

Comprehend it we may not. Touch it we can, whenever we **remember** to do so. Only by an illusion are we separate from it. In truth it enters into every detail of our lives. Actively present in all we think, or say, or do is this **One Identity**, the Ancient of the Ancient Ones, the fundamental and sole Will, whence all manifestation proceeds.

Key 9 has direct connection with each of the Keys preceding it. As the number 9, it is the end of a numerical cycle and includes within itself each of the preceding numbers in the series of digits.

For instance, the Hermit is connected in many ways with the Fool. He **is** the Fool after the latter's ascent from the valley of manifestation. The Fool is Spirit in its aspect of Eternal Youth. The Hermit is the same Spirit in its aspect of all-embracing experience. Both are really one, for youth and age are but appearances of the No-Thing which is at once the oldest and the youngest reality in the universe.

This week, try to establish a logical connection between Key 9 and the other Keys, from 0 to 8 inclusive. You will find this exercise of great benefit in your Tarot work since it is essential that you learn to recognize the relationships existing among the Keys. Skill in this comes by practice. At first it may seem difficult, but if you persist it will become easier and easier. Be sure you make the attempt. Write what you discover in your occult diary.

## LIGHT IN EXTENSION

From earlier instructions in this series you have learned that the old Qabalistic idea that everything in the world of manifestation is made of **light**, condensed and congealed into tangible forms, has received abundant confirmation from modern science. "Extension", in the title of this supplementary text, is related to space, as when we say that extension is that property of a body whereby it occupies a portion of space. Our title has ancient occult associations. It is the English of a Greek phrase used in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

In Key 9, the idea of the extension of light is represented by the star in the Hermit's lantern. The Hermit is the **Self**, the one, indivisible **Being** of whom persons are centers of expression. That Self is the only Will-source in the universe. All personal volitions are really only our **responses** to that One Will. The basis of all personal activity is our participation in that **One Light** and in the power of that **One Will.**

The symbolism of Key 9 is associated with the fundamental letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Yod, which is a component part of every letter in the Flame Alphabet. In Qabalism, the number 9 is named "Foundation", so that the number of this Key stands for all that is **basic** in our lives.

Put simply, the lesson of Key 9 is that our personal lives, in even the **least** particulars, are **responses** to the flow of energy originating in the **One Self**. Whether we know it or not, that Self is what is designated by the pronoun "I," and the letter Yod (equivalent to "I") is also the initial letter of the word יהוה Jehovah, indicating God, and of the noun יחידה Yekhidah, the term Qabalists employ to designate the One Self.

Because the hand (Yod) is the creative instrument of the greater part of human achievements, the emphasis in this pair of lessons is on the sense of touch. Touch is basic in all use of tools. He who suffers from a sensory paralysis which destroys his sense of touch can neither hold nor guide tools. Touch is the foundation for all activities calling for manual skill.

Now, whatever we handle, as shown in the first paragraph of this supplement, is light in extension. Whenever we touch anything, we are actually touching radiant energy made tangible and solid. Moreover, to realize our heart's desire, solid and tangible things must be brought into being. No matter how abstract our ideal may seem to be, there is always something that can be **touched** included in the actual realization.

Thus the exercise for this pair of lessons is fourfold. First, while you are working with Key 9, experiment with touch. Give special attention to your hands. Notice more vividly the slight differences in the feel, say, of a pen and a pencil. Try to register the sensations of whatever you handle. Second, examine your mental images of the external result which will be produced by the realization of your heart's desire, paying particular heed to tactile sensations. Third, before beginning any new activity, remind yourself that the power expressed through your handiwork is a special manifestation of the Divine Energy of the Eternal Hand. Fourth, give a little time, several times daily, to seeking interior contact with what the Hermit symbolizes. These are simple practices, but you will find that their results are far-reaching.